

*Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health for the
Rural District of Leeds (Roundhay and Seacroft) for
the year 1909.*

There have been registered in the past year 152 deaths. Of these 111 have been deaths occurring in the Leeds Corporation Fever Hospitals, two of them being of residents in the district; 26 others in Roundhay, 16 in Seacroft. Two others have been notified to me as occurring in public institutions outside of the district, both of Seacroft people. Of the two deaths occurring in the Fever Hospitals, one was a Seacroft, the other a Roundhay patient; while of the 26 registered as occurring in Roundhay, three were cases of suicide in Roundhay Park Lake, all foreigners to the district, and of the 16 Seacroft registrations, there was one of a person who was merely visiting. The nett corrected total of the deaths is thus: for Roundhay, $26-3+1$, that is 24; for Seacroft, $16+2-1$, in the same way, 17: total, 41.

In all, 65 births have been registered: for Roundhay, 30; for Seacroft, 35. The population of Roundhay by the middle of 1909 I estimate to have been about 2,600; of Seacroft about 1,350, including the permanent staff of the Hospitals with their families; total, 3,950. For the gross death-rate I have to include, in addition, the floating population of the Hospital, as would be the case at a general census. Such gross death-rate would be thus: 36·4 per thousand persons at that time in the district. The real death-rate, that is, including the deaths of residents which occurred outside of the district, and excluding those of non-residents which occurred inside, is 10·37 per thousand inhabitants.

The birth-rate is 16·45 altogether: for Roundhay, 11·5; for Seacroft, 25·9. As regards the infant mortality, there have been four deaths (including one premature birth), three in Roundhay, one in Seacroft. The rate per thousand births is thus: 61·5; for Roundhay, 100; for Seacroft, 28·5.

From zymotic diseases there have been two deaths, though as one of them was of a nurse in the Fever Hospital, from enteric fever, direct infection from the nature of her employment will readily be suspected. The zymotic death-rate is thus: ·5 per thousand. Of deaths from tuberculosis of all organs there have been two, in Seacroft; the tubercular death-rate is thus also ·5 per thousand. One was a case of pulmonary tubercle, making the phthisis death-rate ·25. In either, the Roundhay rate was *nil*. There has only been one death notified from carcinoma, less than for many years previous.

The general corrected death-rate is higher this year than for three years past, but still sensibly lower than the decadal average. In any case, however, the low death-rate has to be discounted by the fact that the birth-rate has been, and is, very low—in the case of Roundhay especially very formidably low, for the births scarcely ever surpass the number of deaths by a number reaching two figures. On the other hand, it includes twelve persons who had passed the age of 70 (and of these several had passed 80, and six had passed 75 years), so that the increase is rather to be regarded as the maturing of other years than as any special defect of

this in particular. Indeed, the sickness rate, as in other cases characterized by a somewhat inclement summer, has been specially low. But there have been two outbreaks of epidemic disease, *viz.*, scarlet fever and diphtheria, happily limited. The latter, which caused the single death, and that of a newly-born infant, appeared to begin in a house where there was a sanitary defect. One has often noticed a coincidence between such defects and a disease which, pretty certainly, cannot begin *de novo*, but must arise from a specific poison: so often as to suggest that a predisposing factor is necessary before the disease can actually manifest itself. And the coincidence is made the more striking in this case, because a child was found at the Roundhay National School to be harbouring the diphtheria germ in her air-passages some weeks after this case. This child, apparently, had had no chance of any direct infection, appeared to be the only one in the school so affected, and lived next door to this family who all caught the disease: the two houses drained into the same system of drains. The discovery of this case is a striking illustration of the potential value of regular systematic medical examination of schools. If the Medical Inspector had not seen her early, it is quite possible that serious mischief might have followed on a scale difficult to cope with. The scarlet fever cases, which, in epidemic form, were confined to Seacroft, seem all to have been traceable to one child, who sickened two days after a visit to Leeds, but not so seriously as to alarm the parents, who sent him shortly afterwards to school; and the mischief was done before the child was found to be peeling. The Council will notice that advantage has been taken of Hospital facilities to a quite unprecedented degree. All suspicion or dislike of the "Fever Hospital" seems to have quite disappeared; my only difficulty has been to reserve the beds for the cases which, by reason of specially inadequate accommodation at home, most urgently needed them.

I have again to report that I have had many vehement complaints about the sewers in Roundhay. I think I may say that I only hear them, to that degree, from people living in that part of Roundhay which drains into the Leeds sewer, and the conclusion is irresistible that there is some inadequacy below the point of junction of the Roundhay with the Leeds sewers. Roundhay, being at the higher level, the sewer gas tends to rise to it, and indeed it is at the highest point of the system, near to the "Mansion," or above, where the complaints are loudest. If sewers are well laid, if they have a sufficient fall, and are adequately flushed, *gas* should not accumulate. Sewer *air* itself would seem to be hardly offensive, and probably innocuous; sewer *gas* may be most offensive, anything but innocuous, and when it occurs to the degree here complained of, it must indicate some fault; that is to say, probably a measure of obstruction or relative stagnation such as to allow of the formation at high tension of gases of putrefaction. From the conditions I do not believe that that occurs in Roundhay itself, where the sewage is weak and the fall very good. It is, indeed, hard to see why, if the sewers are properly laid, and there is a proper outlet, so short a distance of sewers should need ventilation at all. But at least there is ample space at the Roundhay Park gates, where the Leeds system begins and ours ends, where ventilation could be secured without offence to any one. Several ventilators placed there would serve to intercept in some measure the volume of gas which one can trace oneself on any afternoon coming up the Leeds sewer, and so tend to save Roundhay from a most undesirable form of dumping.

Complaints made by the West Riding Board of the pollution of the stream have led to an expert examination of the Sewage Disposal Works of the Council. Briefly, the fault has been that the beds have been taxed beyond the capacity required by the estimate at their erection. In the sewage effluent proper, little or no fault was to be found; the defect lay in the storm-water discharged into the stream hard by, and this owed its pollution to the fact that the bacteria beds, being over-taxed or sludged-up, could not deal with the volume of sewage, and automatically overflowed into the areas reserved for the storm-water. A detailed scheme for the remedy of this defect, and others tending to the same result, has been laid before the Council, on which it is not necessary to dwell here, inasmuch as it will doubtless be submitted to the Local Government Board in due course.

I find that there are still some cesspools left, and in active use, in Roundhay. A special report will be laid before the Council, though they appear, as far as the houses they serve are concerned, to have little power to do any harm. There is no doubt that they are discharging into a stream, and that this should be put an end to.

Of the dairies and cowsheds there is nothing new to report; many are excellent, both as regards structure and management. There is one which is poor structurally, but it is very reasonably kept, and there has been nothing to find any grave fault with this past twelve months. There is another, where the cows have occasionally, that is in dry weather, a very dubious water supply, though the water ordinarily served to them is, I think, beyond reproach. I think there can be no doubt that there is greater attention paid to personal cleanliness on the part of persons engaged in milking than there used to be. There has not been any case of tubercular disease either reported from Leeds or discovered by us.

The slaughter-houses are just as they were: four in number and very decently kept. One of them is within a short distance of one of the last three large combined privy middens which are left in the district, and which are being considered by the Council.

The only crying need of the district, and one which concerns Seacroft only, is more and better cottage houses—a need which it shares in greater or less degree with every other suburban village I know of, where many or most of the houses have been built for a generation with a standard of living lower than the one to which we wish to teach the working classes to-day to aspire and attain. But if it be looked at in its broader light, the question of hygiene is, after all, one of economics. Bad cottages get almost universally bad, dirty tenants; the better class of working men's families get the better houses; that is to say, higher real wages will in the long run be the only way to settle the vexed question of their housing. To this end one essential is the keeping down of public burdens to the lowest possible point, and I, for one, feel strongly that any large expenditure out of rates for housing is sure to produce an ultimate harm, which far out-balances the immediate good.

FACTORIES AND WORKSHOPS.

The factories and workshops or places in this district are few and unimportant; they are mostly domestic in character, except in one case; any employed persons, male or female, are rather employed as friends than on the relation of master and servant.

FACTORIES.

There are two which earn this name in virtue of employing power, both in Seacroft:

- (a) A blacksmith and wheelwright's, not employing these last few months any outside labour. A gas engine drives a vertical saw and sometimes a lathe; during its working the engine and belt are fenced off. No remark is called for.
- (b) A hay and straw dealer, in Seacroft. This man has a vertical boiler and steam engine to drive his chopper. He has a removable fence for the engine; for the chopper, which is situated in a loft reached by a ladder, he has a cover for protection during its working. The machine is used almost solely for domestic purposes; when he employs labour at all it is casual labour.

WORKSHOPS AND PLACES, SEACROFT.

- (1) A cottage in Seacroft Lane, Crossgates, kept for a dressmaker's business. At the moment—the number varies downwards—there are six people working in an upstairs room of an ordinary four-roomed cottage. The means of ventilation are by window and door opening on the staircase. Youngest apprentice, 15 years of age. At the back of the house, which opens on a yard, there are a covered privy midden of very large size, and a stable manure pit at a somewhat greater distance belonging to a shop next door but one. Both are at times complained of, and are both being seen to.

- (2) A joiner and undertaker has a wooden shed, the workplace of father and son. Nothing worthy of remark.
- (3) A bakeshop. This has been set up during the past year, according to plans approved, in the yard behind the owner's shop, being one of the outbuildings adapted. It is beautifully clean and well kept; sink properly trapped. In the same yard, but at a sufficient distance, is the slaughter-house belonging to the same owner. One man employed at bakery.

ROUNDHAY.

- (a) A bakeshop; no change since last year, save that two boys are employed in addition to the man. Bakeshop at the rear of the house, separated by a passage to the side door. Adjoining the bakery, and between the oven and this passage, is an ashpit, kept for the dry refuse of the bakery, cinders, egg shells, and the like; has always been perfectly inoffensive whenever I have seen it.
- (b) An underground bakehouse: the windows which light the place on a level with the pavement. The place is exquisitely clean, and there can be no objection to its continued use. Two workers besides the owner.
- (c) A milliner and draper. The workroom in winter time is a first-floor room looking into side street; ventilation from window; warmed by open fire; lighted by electric light. In cold weather, with their full complement of workers (viz., nine, the youngest being 16—17 years old), the room must be too small, without provision made for automatic ventilation; for summer-time there is an overflow room; but all employed appear to be healthy, save the forewoman, otherwise there is no remark called for. Since sending in my report to the Home Office I have found that what I took to be a lavatory in the floor above the workshop is really a W.C. discharging direct into a rain-water pipe. This will, of course, be altered at once.
- (d) A dressmaker has a wooden building at the back of her house for the work; employs one to three workers, gas fire, ventilation at the end of the shed, plus windows.
- (e) A bootmaker has a wooden shed at the back of his house, where he has two men working. Ventilator at the end in the wall. No remark called for.

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